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Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005

Pattern of conferences

Improving and modernizing the conference facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi

Seventh report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the report of the Secretary-General on improving and modernizing the conference facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi in order to accommodate adequately major meetings and conferences (A/58/530). During its consideration of the report, the Committee met with representatives of the Secretary-General, who provided additional information.

2. By its resolution 57/283 B of 15 April 2003, the General Assembly noted with concern that the severe constraint of adequate conference facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi posed a serious challenge for any further increase in the utilization of conference facilities and services at Nairobi and reiterated its request that the Secretary-General consider improving and modernizing the conference facilities and services at Nairobi. The report of the Secretary-General was submitted in response to that request.

3. The Advisory Committee notes from the report that in the past four years the number of meetings held at the United Nations Office at Nairobi Conference Centre has increased by 18 per cent and is expected to increase an additional 5 per cent in the biennium 2004-2005 (see A/58/530, para. 5). As indicated in that report, the seating capacity and versatility of the Conference Centre no longer meet the requirements of the institutional clients of the Office, namely, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), for which they were initially constructed, owing to the large number of participants from non-governmental organizations (see ibid., para. 7).

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4. On the basis of a review undertaken by the Secretariat to respond to the request of the General Assembly, two phases were identified to improve and modernize conference facilities at Nairobi. Phase I would involve the modernization of existing conference facilities at an estimated cost of $3,479,000. The measures would increase the capacity by some 300 seats and would include the installation of modern simultaneous interpretation equipment and upgrading of the sound, air-conditioning and data-distribution systems (see ibid., para. 10). The second phase involves the possibility of future construction in addition to the alteration and modernization to be carried out under phase I (ibid., para. 19).

5. Of the total estimated requirement of $3,479,000 for the modernization of conference facilities, a provision of $1,427,000 has already been requested under section 33, Construction, alteration, improvement and major maintenance, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005 (A/58/6 (Sect. 33) and A/58/6 (Corr.1)) for the modernization of conference rooms 1, 5, 6, 7 and 8. With regard to the modernization of rooms 2, 3 and 4, it is proposed that the requirements be met in part from the uncommitted balance of the construction-in-progress account, which amounted to $913,300 as at 30 June 2003. It is proposed that the remaining requirement of $1,139,000 be considered subject to the procedures set out in resolution 42/211 of 21 December 1987 for the use and operation of the contingency fund (A/58/530, para. 22).

6. With regard to the construction of additional conference rooms, the Advisory Committee notes the intention to consider such construction at a later stage in accordance with the building construction procedures outlined in the report of the Committee of 3 November 1981 (A/36/643) and in the light of experience gained from operating the modernized conference facilities of the United Nations Office at Nairobi during the biennium 2006-2007 (see A/58/530, para. 23).

7. **The Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly authorize the modernization of the existing conference facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi as described in paragraph 10 of the report of the Secretary-General. The Committee also recommends that the Assembly authorize the funding of the total estimated cost for modernization of $3,479,000, as outlined in paragraph 22 of the report.**